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RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 3687
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RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 0125
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 3345
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NEW DELHI 006298

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TAGS: PREL PGOV PTER PINR ECON ECIN IN

SUBJECT: INDIA'S ROLE IN NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT:
TRANSFORMATION OR DISTANCE?

REF: NEW DELHI 006256

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Classified By: Political Counselor Ted Osius Reasons 1.4 (B, D)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: India may attempt to transform its role to that of a "bridge power" between the developed North and the impoverished South during the upcoming NAM Summit in Havana. In the context of considerable public and internal GOI debate about the utility of NAM and India's proper place in the organization, the GOI appears set to direct its NAM efforts on playing a more guiding role economic role with its lesser developed NAM partners by focusing on preferential trade, knowledge exchange, and other programs. However, some other embassy contacts claim that PM Singh is going to the Summit (under pressure from his left flank) as a silent pallbearer at the funeral of an organization that has outlived its usefulness and failed to adapt to current global realities. They contend that the PM will use the forum to remind the world that Indian foreign policy is driven by national interest and reassure the NAM that no country will dominate Indian foreign policy. The GOI will also serve, they assert, as a moderate, rational voice to encourage the NAM to transform to a more mainstream global organization. END
SUMMARY

-----PM's Special Committee on NAM advocates "Bridge Power Role"-----

¶2. (C) In preparation for Prime Minister Singh and newly

appointed Foreign Secretary Shiv Shankar Menon's attendance at the NAM Summit in Havana, the PM formed a special committee of political centrists and professional bureaucrats to prepare a platform. They reportedly advocate India flexing its new economic and political muscles and asserting itself as a "bridge power" in NAM. The committee is pressing for India to use its expanding relationships with developed countries to influence "Northern" policies to the benefit of NAM members. It also envisions a program in which India takes more initiative with the NAM countries and discusses unilateral preferential trade programs, cultural and developmental exchanges favorable to its less developed NAM partners, and asserts its leadership as "the big boy at the table".

-----What have you done for me lately?-----

¶3. (C) Segments of the media, public, and think tankers are dubious of the utility of NAM for India. At a recent conference in Delhi(see reftel), "The XIV NAM Summit in Havana and the Future of the Non-Aligned Movement", the Indian attendees consistently minimized the importance of NAM when questioning the featured speaker, Cuban Ambassador Juan Carretero. They derided the movement as "an entity of hibernation devoid of leadership" for NAM's failure to join the mainstream of the globalized economy and accused NAM of being "unable to reinvent itself to effect change in the UN".

The September 7 issue of the "Asian Age", went so far as to headline a story with "NAM is dead", arguing that the group is "antiquated", "lacks influence", and "is counter to India's primary interests."

-----A chance to break the mold?-----

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¶4. (C) COMMENT: We believe that the GOI will take a fluid approach to the NAM Summit. The PM's constituency on the left is appeased by the level of the delegation, while the Indian political center begrudgingly realizes that economics rule the day and prefers that the PM lay the groundwork for a NAM focusing on economic reality-based rapprochement with the North instead of an America-bashing agenda. Therefore, the PM may have a freer hand to influence positions on NAM issues. If it becomes apparent during the summit that his economy-driven, transformation to global realities agenda for NAM is failing, he may choose the summit as a propitious moment to signal quietly the beginning of the end for Indian leadership in NAM while continuing in the future to pay it lip service. Embassy contacts insist that the PM will deliver a foreign policy speech of major import and urged us to read carefully between the lines. However, we have heard that before without anything coming to fruition. Post will continue to follow the NAM Summit closely and report accordingly. END COMMENT

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